

### Finding Unstructured Times Difficult

- Encourage the student to join structured lunchtime clubs, focusing on shared interests.
- Ensure that staff on duty are aware of the signs that a student is becoming overwhelmed and know the steps to take if this happens.
- Provide a quiet safe space for the student to go to if they are finding social interaction too demanding.
- Use a buddy system. However, it is important to not let the autistic child become dependent upon their buddy.
- Provide a social skills or social learning group for the student to attend to help them learn about social interaction and friendships.

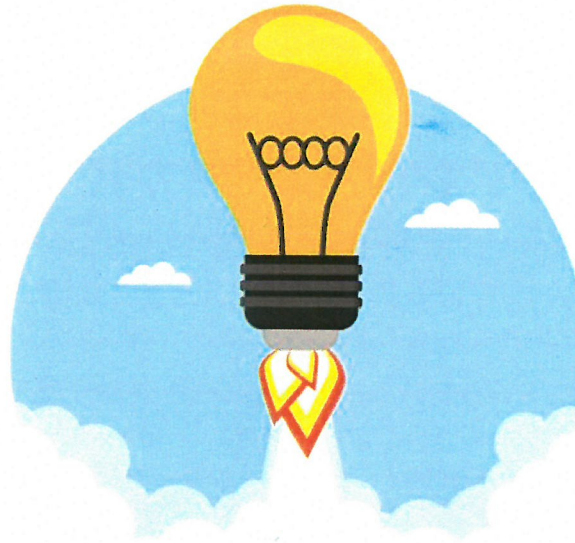
### Difficulties Coping with Change

- Use social stories to prepare the student. For example, you could make a Social Story about going on a field trip to help the student understand what is going to happen and what they can expect.
- Where possible, inform the student of any changes to their routine in advance and continue to remind them about this change. It could also be useful to write this down in a diary or planner.
- If possible, visit the location of the change beforehand. This could be a new classroom or building and could also include meeting and new staff that they will be working with.
- If the child becomes distressed, stay calm and offer praise and rewards when they successfully cope with change.
- Make it clear that you understand their feelings.
- Pre-teach coping mechanisms such as breathing exercises and model an appropriate reaction to change. For example, you could say: "Oh, I expected to be able to walk to the stop today but it is raining. Never mind, I can go tomorrow."

### What is Autistic Spectrum Disorder? (ASD)

**Autism is a complex neurobehavioral condition that includes impairments in social interaction and developmental language and communication skills combined with rigid, repetitive behaviours. Because of the range of symptoms, this condition is now called autism spectrum disorder (ASD).**

**Autism is not an illness, but simply means that the brain works in a different way from other people.**



### Processing Difficulties

- Say it less and say it slowly.
- Pause between words and phrases to allow the student time to process what has been said.
- Always try to ask one question at a time and allow the student to respond before asking another.
- Give the student one instruction at a time with a step-by-step approach.
- Use specific key words, repeating and stressing them.
- Use less non-verbal communication (eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, body language) if the student is showing signs of anxiety.
- Be aware of the environment (noisy/crowded) that you are in. Sensory input may be affecting how much they can process.
- Use unambiguous language. Students can sometimes have trouble understanding phrases such as "pull your socks up" as they may take this literally. Always try to be very clear and precise with your speech.
- A student with processing difficulties can sometimes benefit from extra time to copy from a PowerPoint or board, along with additional time in assessments etc.

### Sensory Difficulties

- A child who struggles to deal with everyday sensory information can experience sensory overload, or information overload. Too much information can cause stress, anxiety, and possibly physical pain. Be aware of these signs so that you can intervene quickly.
- Be prepared. Tell the student about possible sensory stimuli they may experience in different environments.
- Be aware. Look at the environment to see if it is creating difficulties. Can you change anything? This can include layout of the class, displays etc.

## TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR ASD

### Communication Difficulties

- Always use their name at the beginning so that they know you are talking to them.
- Make sure they are paying attention before you ask a question or give an instruction. The signs that someone is paying attention will be different for different people and sometimes it may seem that the student is not paying attention when they are (for example, through no eye-contact).
- If the student has a special interest it can be helpful to use this to engage them in a conversation or activity. Perhaps try to build this into the lesson.
- A child with ASD may act badly at times to get you to focus on them. Ignoring this behaviour is often the best way to prevent it.
- Don't let your feelings get hurt if the child does not respond to you as you'd like.
- Try to use visual supports to help communicate with the child, this can sometimes be easier for them if they are struggling to put their thoughts or feelings into words.
- Do not insist upon eye-contact as this can sometimes be very difficult.
- Use emotion flashcards to help the child communicate how they are feeling. These can be detailed or simple (for example red, yellow and green).
- Using gestural support, or sign language can help the child to understand what is being asked of them. E.g. If saying 'Put on your bag' doesn't have the desired effect, repeat (after a short time for processing) the words and mime the action of putting on a bag.
- Some students can respond well to hand gestures to communicate certain instructions such as sit down, do not talk etc. These will need to be pre-taught to the child and practiced in order to ensure that they understand the meaning fully.
- We must be consistent in the way we communicate with the student. It is important to all use the same form of communication when communicating with certain individuals.
- It is always best to know when to use open and closed questions (closed question requires a short answer, often "yes" or "no", open questions seek longer answers). It could be useful to inform the student of what kind of response you are looking for.



### Fine Motor Skills Difficulties (Handwriting)

- Therapy putties and hand exercisers are fun toys that help build strength in the hand as they squeeze and knead during play.
- For many, weighted and non-weighted grips provide the tactile and pressure-related guidance needed to stabilize and strengthen a child's hold.
- Support writing with the use of a WP where possible. It could also be useful to modify how the student works, for example they could take notes by writing a short list, or by using images. There is no quick fix to this and you must attempt your lesson to fit the ability of the child.

### Difficulties with Social Skills

- Reinforce what the student does well socially - use behaviour-specific praise (and concrete reinforcement if needed) to shape good social behaviour.
- Teach context clues and referencing those around you, for example: if everyone else is silent when working, that means that it is likely you should be too.
- Identify peers who model strong social skills and pair the student with them. This could be incorporated into your seating plan or group work.
- Define expectations of behaviour in advance.
- Celebrate strengths and use these to your advantage. Many students with autism have a good sense of humour or other positive characteristics or skills. Use these to motivate interest in social interactions or give a student a chance to shine and be viewed as competent and interesting.
- Encourage empathy and reciprocity by using stories and other supports to help the student understand the emotions and feelings of others.
- Be consistent with behaviours that you wish the student to learn. For example, if the student does not greet others, ensure that you always greet them at the door.
- You can teach emotions by showing images or videos of people in social situations and asking your child questions about how they think the people feel. Pause the video and point out the tone of voice, facial expression and body cues that show how the person on the video might be feeling.
- Remember that students with autism often find it hard to recognise non-verbal cues. Do not assume that the student will understand the emotions and feelings of others without it being verbally expressed. This can sometimes cause confusion for the child and those around them. It is important to recognise this and talk about situations reflectively.
- Role-play can help the child learn and practise the skills that they need before entering a certain situation. For example, before taking a bus for the first time a student could role-play what they will say to the driver.